

consideration the bill (H.R. 2401) to require analyses of the cumulative and incremental impacts of certain rules and actions of the Environmental Protection Agency, and for other purposes:

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Chair, for decades public health has been the basis for how we enact emissions standards. The bill before us today, the TRAIN Act, represents a view of environmental protection that is simply off the rails.

Initially drafted to study the effect of new and proposed clean air rules, it has troublingly morphed into a bill blocking action on them indefinitely. First, it would prohibit the EPA from finalizing its rule to reduce mercury emissions. This rule had its origin in the 1990 Clean Air Act, which passed this House with a strong bipartisan vote of 401–25. An American Lung Association study earlier this year found that today 70 percent of Republicans still support stricter limits on mercury. Second, the TRAIN Act would prevent the implementation of new rules protecting communities from pollutants drifting over from out-of-state.

Clean air regulations are ultimately investments in our economy. They save us hundreds of billions of dollars each year in health costs from associated lung ailments. Even further, they incentivize the growth of clean technologies that will help us remain competitive and increase our innovation and manufacturing strength here in America.

While I oppose this bill overall, Congressmen CONNOLLY and MCNERNEY have proposed amendments that would refocus the bill where Congress's attention belongs—job creation. Their amendments would support Democrats' Make It in America plan by studying the job-creating effects of pollution controls. Additionally, Congresswoman RICHARDSON's amendment would prevent a cut in the program reauthorized just last year by voice vote that supports American-made technology to reduce diesel bus exhaust.

Now is not the time to debate the environmental protections supported overwhelmingly and on a bipartisan basis, which carry tangible health and economic benefits. Instead we should be focusing on serious steps to get more Americans back to work.

NATIONAL AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARD UNDER THE CLEAN AIR ACT

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 23, 2011

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that, according to Environment Ohio, the Cleveland Lorain Elyria area has the 14th smoggiest air among all large metropolitan areas in the U.S. Only a few weeks ago, the President announced he would prevent an update of the rule designed to reduce smog. The American people deserve clean air.

The Bush Administration failed to update National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) under the Clean Air Act for ozone pollution until 2006, when a standard was issued which was much less protective of public health than his scientific advisory board recommended; 75 parts per billion (ppb) of ozone, an air pollutant that is hazardous to fragile lung tissue. The scientific advisors' rec-

ommendation was between 60 and 70 ppb, which would have avoided up to 8,000 premature deaths; 3,800 nonfatal heart attacks; and 40,000 asthma attacks every year. The science is clear.

By invoking the industry fake argument that pulling back the update will help the economy, the Obama Administration has chosen to act in contravention of the Clean Air Act, which clearly prohibits consideration of costs in setting the standards designed to protect public health.

Everyone has a right to clean air. This abdication of responsibility affects millions of Americans every day, with every breath. It disproportionately affects the most vulnerable among us, like children, the elderly, and the ill. The story of the ozone rule is aptly told by Verna Riffe Biemel, a constituent of mine. She said:

"On Aug. 4, 2010, my mother succumbed to lung disease, pulmonary fibrosis. I vividly remember the difficulty she had breathing on bad air days. In fact, during her last year, she couldn't go outside at all on those days and felt the difference inside. No one likes to see a loved one struggle to breathe. No one should have to fight for clean air. Congress owes the American public the opportunity to breathe clean air."

She is right. If the President won't do it, Congress should.

INTRODUCING THE HIRING PROCESS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2011

HON. JOHN P. SARBANES

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 23, 2011

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. Speaker, in the coming decade, close to 50% of the federal workforce will be eligible to retire, making the development of the next generation of federal workers even more vital. Yet, as federal agencies struggle to recruit and retain the next generation of public servants, we continue to force hiring managers and prospective candidates to navigate an out-dated and bureaucratic hiring process that deters the best and brightest from pursuing careers in public service.

In short, the Federal hiring process is broken. Despite increased pressure from the Administration to improve hiring and recruitment processes:

Many federal agencies still take as long as 200 days from the date of a vacancy to hire—delays that compromise federal recruitment, jeopardize government operations and waste taxpayer dollars.

The hiring process at federal agencies involves as many as 110 discrete steps and more than 45 hand-offs between managers, administrative officers and HR specialists.

In some agencies, hiring managers are required to select from the three highest-rated candidates selected by HR specialists, making it impossible for managers to play a role in recruiting their own staff.

Rather than base initial screening decisions on applicants' resume and cover letter, candidates for federal employment must provide lengthy, essay-style responses about the applicants' knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs).

That is why I have joined Senator AKAKA in authoring this common-sense, good govern-

ment legislation to bring the federal hiring process in-line with private sector best practices by:

Requiring agencies and departments to develop a comprehensive strategic workforce plan focused on hiring, recruitment, skills deficiencies and potential process reforms;

Moving the federal government to a resume- and cover letter-based application system;

Shortening the federal hiring process to an average of 80 days after a vacancy has been posted;

Better integrating hiring managers into all stages of the hiring process and providing them with greater flexibility in final decisions; and

Requiring government wide data collection and reporting on the efficacy of the hiring process.

This legislation has a long, bipartisan history—in 2009, Senators AKAKA and VOINOVICH authored similar legislation in the Senate. In 2010, President Obama recognized the tremendous personnel challenges facing federal agencies and issued Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process, a Presidential Memorandum on federal hiring reform that includes some of the elements in our legislation. The Senate unanimously passed the Akaka-Voinovich Federal Hiring Process Improvement Act in the previous Congress, only to watch it die in the House.

Enactment of a substantive, bipartisan hiring reform bill is long past due. Our legislation seeks to codify and build upon the Administration's memorandum, while ensuring an unprecedented level of transparency in and oversight of the federal hiring process. The Washington Post called on Congress to pass the Federal Hiring Process Improvement Act in a July 2011 editorial, arguing that "today's antiquated hiring practices are thwarting a generation of inspired public servants in the making."

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Senator AKAKA for his tremendous leadership on federal hiring and recruitment issues and to thank the Partnership for Public Service for their advocacy in support of hiring reform. Whether it is a firefighter saving lives, an agent protecting our borders, a scientist pioneering new research, or a nurse caring for our veterans, we owe it to taxpayers and the next generation of public servants to build a better hiring process and to ensure that those with the desire to serve our country are able to do so.

[From the Washington Post, July 3, 2011]

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS STILL TOO SLOW TO HIRE

Less lucrative compensation and benefits aren't the only factors turning thousands of promising college graduates away from public service. The hiring process for employment in the federal government also remains impossibly long, and many recent alumni just aren't financially equipped to wait it out.

More than a year ago, President Obama launched what the administration called a "comprehensive initiative to address major, long-standing impediments to recruiting and hiring the best and the brightest into the federal civilian workforce." Mr. Obama directed the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to institute reforms—dubbed the Pathway Programs—to streamline hiring for students as well as recent graduates. As The Post reported then, "Management Director John Berry drew a rousing ovation" when the agency announced it was replacing